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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

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STUDIES AND STUDY-VALUES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF LARGE CITIES

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In a social order like our own, where there is no central authority directing educational movements, developments in education are modified more or less by local conditions. What these developments are, to what degree they are alike, and in what ways they differ can only be determined by summarizing and comparing the educational activities of different localities.

The influences determining the development of rural and village schools are different from those acting upon the schools of small cities, while the forces acting upon education in small cities are again different from those modifying the school work of large cities. A comparison of any aspect of the school activities of these units, or of phases of work in a single unit, whether it be rural communities or small or large cities is both interesting and instructive.

STUDIES COMPRISING THE ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

No educational theme is at present claiming more attention, at least in large cities, than the question of the course of study. A country-wide demand has arisen that the elementary-school curriculum be simplified, that the component studies be revalued, and that the three R's be again given their rightful place in the schools. Local authorities are asking what branches make up

the elementary curriculum in other cities of like size, in what grades are the different subjects taught, what time values are given to the several studies, what place is assigned the three R's?

Table I shows the several studies taught in the elementary schools of fifty of our largest cities and the number of this fifty teaching each branch:

TABLE I

Studies	Reading	Spelling	Grammar	Lang. and Comp.	Writing	Arithmetic	Algebra	Geometry	Geography	History	Civics	Music	Drawing	Manual Training	Cooking	Sewing	Physical Training	Physiology	Hygiene	Elementary Science	Bookkeeping	Typewriting
Number of the fifty cities teaching each branch	50	50	38	50	50	50	19	3	50	50	18	50	50	41	32	41	46	46	44	30	5	1

In the first fifty cities of the country, twenty-two different subjects find place in the curriculum of the elementary school. Reading, spelling, language and composition, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, music, and drawing are taught in all. Of the remaining number, grammar, manual training, sewing, physical training, physiology, and hygiene are taught in thirty-eight or more, while cooking is given place in thirty-two, elementary-school science in thirty, algebra and civics in eighteen and more, bookkeeping in five, geometry in three, and typewriting in one.

Reading, spelling, language and composition, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, music, and drawing, it may therefore be said, constitute the core of the elementary course of study in American cities of size; in addition 80 per cent. give instruction in grammar, manual training, sewing, physical training, physiology, and hygiene; 60 per cent. make place also for cooking and elementary school science, but it is only here and there that other subjects are taught.

GRADES IN WHICH STUDIES ARE TAUGHT

Table II shows the branches included in the elementary courses of study of fifty of our largest cities, the number teach-

ing each branch, also the grades in which each is taught and the number teaching the given subject in the respective grade:

TABLE II

	No. of Fifty Cities Teaching	Grade in Which Each Is Taught and Number of the Fifty Cities Teaching in Respective Grade							
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1 Reading	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
2 Spelling.....	50	40	47	50	50	50	50	50	50
3 Grammar ..	38	..	I	3	5	14	25	34	35
4 Language and Com- position ..	50	46	46	47	50	50	50	48	48
5 Writing.....	50	48	50	50	50	50	50	46	43
6 Arithmetic	50	35	46	50	50	50	50	50	50
7 Algebra.....	19	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	19
8 Geometry....	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	I	3
9 Geography..	50	4	9	32	50	50	50	46	32
10 History.....	50	8	9	11	17	31	39	48	50
11 Civics.....	18	..	..	..	..	..	..	6	18
12 Music.....	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
13 Drawing....	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
14 Manual Training..	41	21	21	21	20	22	28	35	35
15 Cooking	32	..	..	..	..	I	2	28	28
16 Sewing	41	..	..	5	13	29	37	27	13
17 Physical Training..	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	43	43
18 Physiology	46	21	22	23	30	36	35	38	40
19 Hygiene	44	35	36	38	38	43	41	40	38
20 Elementary Science ..	30	24	24	24	24	25	25	25	26
21 Bookkeeping	5	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5
22 Typewriting	I	..	..	..	..	..	..	I	I

Reading, spelling, language and composition, writing, music and drawing are the only studies, it will be observed, that are actually or practically taught in all the grades of the schools of the fifty cities under consideration. Though grammar finds place in other grades, it is confined in the main to the last three. With regard to arithmetic, there is a growing movement to either omit altogether or to make the work in it during the first two years incidental, regular and systematic instruction beginning only with the third. In cities, where algebra or geometry are taught, one would expect these studies to supplant arithmetic, but this is not the case; they seem to be taught not as supplementary to arithmetic, but as separate and

additional branches. Few cities give place to geography before the third grade, and this instruction is confined largely to the fifth, sixth, and seventh years, and though it is taught in the eighth grade, there is a tendency to complete the work in this branch in the seventh. Despite the attractiveness and educative value of historical materials, only here and there is history taught before the fifth grade, and it is taught by all the cities

TABLE III

	Grade							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Reading.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Spelling.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Grammar.....	+	+	+
Language and Composi- tion.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Writing.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Arithmetic.....	..	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Algebra.....	+
Geography.....	+	+	+	+	+	+
History.....	+	+	+	+
Civics.....	+
Music.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Drawing.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Manual Training.....	+	+	+	+
Cooking.....	+	+
Sewing.....	+	+	+	..
Physical Training.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Physiology.....	+	+	+	+	+
Hygiene.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Elementary Science.....	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

in question in but one, the eighth. As a rule manual training is combined during the first four years with drawing, and notwithstanding it is given separate place in some cities in the fifth and sixth, the real work in this branch is confined largely to the seventh and eighth years, so also with cooking for girls which takes the place in these grades of the manual training for boys; sewing on the other hand seemingly finds its proper place in the fifth, sixth, and seventh, yet where sewing is taught in the seventh, cooking is as a rule confined solely to the eighth. Though physical training and hygiene are practically taught in all the grades in all the cities where they have been introduced,

physiology is taken into account more generally in the fourth and thereafter. Likewise, with elementary science, where it is given place, it is taught on the whole in all grades.

The grades in which the studies, comprising the elementary curriculum in cities of size, are taught, notwithstanding variations, are indicated on the preceding page.

Table III shows the principal studies comprising the elementary course of study in large cities and the grades in which each is generally taught.

STUDY-VALUES

Though a seemingly large number of studies find place in the curriculum of the elementary schools of large cities, these are by no means regarded of equal importance. The significance attributed to a study is indicated by the time devoted to it.

Table IV shows the percentage of the total time of the elementary school given in 1907-8 to each study in eleven typical large cities, it also shows the average percentage of the total time assigned each branch:

TABLE IV

	Boston	New York	Chicago	Rochester	Cincinnati	Indianapolis	St. Louis	Milwaukee	Kansas City	San Francisco	Cleveland	Average Per Cent.
Reading.....	26.25	32.50	40.26	17.77	14.13	17.80	17.90	22.79	14.50	30.03	26.31	23.74
Spelling.....	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	5.28	9.57	5.33	6.39	8.07	10.70	5.23	5.94	7.06
Grammar.....	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	2.39	3.25	2.16	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	3.03	2.85
Language, Composition and Supplementary Reading.....	20.14	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	7.98	11.37	18.03	10.05	13.27	11.20	10.56	12.18	12.75
Writing.....	<i>a</i>	5.81	4.88	5.08	5.41	7.86	11.05	6.86	9.66	3.77	5.73	5.71
Arithmetic.....	16.41	13.40	11.02	18.60	18.78	11.07	14.98	14.71	15.10	16.59	16.40	15.26
Geography—History.....	10.06	10.77	9.65	16.95	13.28	9.66	11.50	9.55	14.10	12.82	9.30	11.60
Music.....	4.47	4.85	6.37	4.79	4.87	6.85	8.18	6.92	6.60	5.38	5.40	5.88
Drawing.....	6.85	8.90	6.95	4.78	6.05	9.45	9.98	6.92	11.50	4.52	4.91	7.34
Manual Training.....	6.15	4.65	9.85	7.83	2.16	2.16	2.38	6.23	<i>c</i>	1.80	4.73	4.79
Physical Training—Physiology and Hygiene.....	7.09	13.05	5.17	6.57	7.40	8.65	5.32	4.61	4.00	5.23	5.31	6.58
Elementary School Science..	2.51	6.01	5.80	1.99	3.79	.....	2.92	.....	3.11	3.11	.....	3.65

a. Included in language; *b.* Included in reading; *c.* Included in drawing.

There is considerable variation, it will be observed, in the value accredited the same subject in different cities and in that ascribed different studies in the same city. This, however, is true for the eleven in review, and doubtless for all large cities,

namely, that reading is taken to be of first importance; to it is ascribed on the average 8.48 per cent. more of the total time of the elementary school than to arithmetic, almost twice as much as to geography and history combined; while practically as much time is accredited to it on the average as is devoted to music, drawing, manual training, physical training, physiology, hygiene, and elementary-school science taken together. In a word, almost one-fourth of the total time of the elementary school of these eleven typical large cities is given to the teaching of reading.

Of second importance is arithmetic, to which is credited practically every sixth day the school is in session. The third in order is language and composition, followed closely by geography and history.

Of fourth importance are spelling, writing, music, drawing, manual training, and physical training, physiology and hygiene, while grammar and elementary-school science are being ranked as fifth in significance.

GROUP-VALUES

Further light is thrown upon the value ascribed the different studies in the elementary schools of large cities, if these studies are grouped and the values assigned the different groups compared. The studies of the elementary school may be classified as the three R's, the fundamentals, and special subjects.

Table V shows the per cent. of the total time, of the elementary schools of eleven typical large cities, given in 1907-8 to the three R's, to the fundamentals, and to the special subjects, also the average per cent. of the total time devoted to each group.

From Table V and taking the average there given as the basis of judgment, the three R's, it would seem, are regarded in large cities as the subjects of first rank, to them is assigned six-tenths of the total time of the elementary school or in other words, upon the teaching of children to read, write, and cipher is expended six-tenths of the energies of the teacher and six dollars out of every ten levied for elementary education.

If to reading—employed to comprise spelling, language,

and grammar—to writing and to arithmetic there are added geography and history, and these branches taken together are characterized as fundamentals, to them is accredited, in cities of first size, almost three-fourths of the time of the elementary

TABLE V

	Boston	New York	Chicago	Rochester	Cincinnati	Indianapolis	St. Louis	Milwaukee	Kansas City	San Francisco	Cleveland	Average Per Cent.
The Three R's: Reading—Reading, Spelling, Grammar and Language Writing Arithmetic	62.80	51.71	56.16	57.10	62.51	63.15	60.87	63.70	61.16	67.08	70.19	61.49
The Fundamentals: Reading Writing Arithmetic Geography History	72.86	62.48	65.81	74.05	75.79	72.81	71.87	73.25	75.26	79.90	79.55	73.05
The Special Subjects: Music Drawing Manual Training Physical Training— Physiology and Hygiene Elementary School Science	27.06	37.46	34.14	25.96	24.27	27.11	28.78	24.68	25.21	20.04	20.41	26.82

school, while but one-fourth is credited to the special subjects or to the so-called “fads and frills.” With such a conception of the values of studies prevailing, there seems little immediate danger of the “fads and frills” or of the special subjects, notwithstanding their increasing worth, taking possession of our city schools and of the fundamentals being given a subordinate place in the education of the rising generation.